

Report of the
Board of Regents

National Library of Medicine
Long Range Plan

Electronic Imaging



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
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Foreword

The 1987 Long Range Plan of the Board of Regents* recommended that the National Library of Medicine should "...thoroughly and systematically investigate the technical requirements for and feasibility of instituting a biomedical images library." It encouraged NLM to consider building and disseminating medical image libraries much the same way it acquires, indexes, and provides access to the biomedical literature. Early last year under the direction of the Board of Regents, an ad hoc planning panel was convened to explore in-depth the proper role for NLM in this rapidly changing field.

The Panel was chaired by Dr. Donald West King of the University of Chicago, and represented both the producers and potential users of biomedical images in medical education, research and clinical practice. In charging the Panel, the Board wished to know whether such image libraries would be used by students, faculty and clinicians; what standards and data exchange arrangements would be needed; and whether the proposed 3-D Visible Human Project, a very compelling idea that emerged from an earlier NLM workshop, would be a good place to begin.

On January 18, 1990, the Board of Regents reviewed the draft report prepared by the Panel and unanimously approved the incorporation of its recommendations as part of the NLM Long Range Plan. The Board applauded the leadership of Dr. King and commended Dr. Daniel R. Masys, Director of the NLM's Lister Hill National Center for Biomedical Communications, for his outstanding assistance to the work of the Panel. This report and the recommendations contained therein, presents exciting new challenges to the National Library of Medicine in advancing our fundamental knowledge and use of computerized representations of biomedical structural data, and its transmission across national networks in support of the needs of the biomedical community.

Don E. Detmer, M.D.
Chairman
Board of Regents
National Library of Medicine

*National Library of Medicine, Long Range Plan; report of the NLM Board of Regents. Bethesda, Md.: National Library of Medicine, January 1987.

Preface

The concept of building electronic image libraries, and providing for their transmission across high speed digital networks, presents a special opportunity for biomedical science in general and for the National Library of Medicine in particular. Much of our understanding of complicated processes of health and disease lies in images, pictures of body systems, organs and molecules which cannot effectively be described in words. The NLM Planning Panel on Electronic Imaging has defined a role for the Library which capitalizes on its unique technical capabilities, its very considerable stature in the biomedical community, and its position as a government agency with a Congressionally-mandated mission to acquire and disseminate biomedical knowledge -- in all its forms.

I am indebted to the serious discussion and diligent work on the part of the entire Panel membership during its two meetings in Bethesda, and its between-meeting deliberations. I thank them on behalf of the Library for their excellent contributions. I am also grateful for the support of Dr. Donald A.B. Lindberg, NLM Director; the staff of the Office of Planning and Evaluation, its Director, Dr. Elliot R. Siegel, and Ms. Susan B. Slater who served as Executive Secretary to the Panel; and to the other capable NLM staff who assisted us.

Donald West King, M.D.
Chairman
Planning Panel on Electronic Imaging

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